

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A polishing composition comprising:
 - (a) silica abrasive,
 - (b) methanol, and
 - (c) a liquid carrier,

wherein the polishing composition has a pH of about 1 to about 6 and the interaction between the silica abrasive and the methanol provides colloidal stability to the polishing composition.

2. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the silica abrasive is selected from the group consisting of fumed silica, colloidal silica, silica-coated abrasive particles, and combinations thereof.

3. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the polishing composition has a pH of about 1.5 to about 4.

4. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the liquid carrier comprises water.

5. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the methanol is present in an amount of about 100 ppm to about 1500 ppm.

6. The polishing composition of claim 5, wherein the methanol is present in an amount of about 100 ppm to about 800 ppm.

7. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the silica abrasive is present in an amount of about 0.5 wt.% to about 5 wt.%.

8. The polishing composition of claim 5, wherein about 200 ppm to about 3000 ppm of methanol is present per wt.% of silica abrasive.

9. The polishing composition of claim 6, wherein about 200 ppm to about 1600 ppm of methanol is present per wt.% of silica abrasive.

10. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the composition further comprises an oxidizer.

11. The polishing composition of claim 1, wherein the composition further comprises a complexing agent.

12. A method of polishing a substrate comprising (i) contacting a substrate comprising a silicon-based layer with the polishing composition of claim 1, and (ii) abrading at least a portion of the substrate with the polishing composition to polish the substrate.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the substrate further comprises a tungsten layer.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the substrate further comprises a copper or nickel layer.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the silicon-based layer is silicon dioxide and the substrate further comprises a silicon nitride layer.

16. A method of stabilizing a polishing composition comprising a silica abrasive and a liquid carrier comprising (i) providing silica abrasive, (ii) providing a liquid carrier for the silica abrasive, and (iii) contacting the silica abrasive with methanol to form a stabilized polishing composition.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the polishing composition has a pH of about 1 to about 6.